

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MAN CONVICTED OF FIRST DEGREE MURDER AND RAPE OF MISSING WOMAN

PHOENIX, ARIZONA -- The United States Attorney's Office for the District of Arizona announced that on February 20, 2004, Irvin Cepi, 6/1/80, of Jeddito, Arizona, on the Navajo Reservation, was found guilty of the following seven counts: First Degree Murder, Felony Murder in the Course of Kidnaping, Kidnaping, Felony Murder in the Course of Aggravated Sexual Abuse, Aggravated Sexual Abuse, Sexual Abuse Resulting in Death, and Conspiracy to Commit First Degree Murder, by a federal jury in Prescott, Arizona.

The evidence at trial showed that on May 18, 2002, Irvin Cepi and three other men picked up Charlotte Jane Brown 4/25/64, of Steamboat, Arizona while she was hitchhiking from Steamboat to Holbrook where she had found work. Charlotte left intending to return the same day. She was never seen again by her family.

The evidence at trial showed that Irvin Cepi and the other men had been drinking during the day. After Charlotte Brown was picked up, she was driven to a remote location where she was restrained and forcibly raped by Irvin Cepi and each of the three other assailants. Following the rape, Charlotte Brown was

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forced back into the car and driven a few miles away, to yet another remote location in the woods northeast of Jeddito, Arizona. As they drove to the second location, Irvin Cepi and the others plotted to kill Charlotte Brown in order to prevent her from reporting them for the rape. Irvin Cepi killed Charlotte Brown by smashing a large rock upon the right side of her head while she pleaded with him for her life. After Cepi struck the victim, one of Cepi's accomplices threw another rock at the victim, also striking her in the head. After she had been killed, Irvin Cepi concealed Charlotte Brown's body under some rocks in a nearby wash. Charlotte Brown's partial remains, scattered and scavenged by predators, were not discovered until August 26, 2002. In the intervening months, Charlotte Brown's family had extensively posted "missing person" flyers in the area and a criminal investigation had commenced at the direction of the FBI and the Navajo Nation Department of Law Enforcement. Charlotte Brown is survived by her daughter, her mother and numerous siblings.

The case was came to the attention of law enforcement in mid-August 2002 when someone called to report rumors about suspects being involved in the murder of Charlotte Brown. Investigators traced the rumors back to the defendants. One of the defendants led investigators back to the approximate area where Charlotte was killed. On August 20, 2002, the criminal investigators discovered a single pelvic bone that appeared to be human. After confirming it was human, the investigators went back to the area and found the scattered remains of Charlotte which included hair, scattered bones, bone fragments and remnants from her earrings. Even with the few skeletal remains that were submitted, the Medical Examiner in Albuquerque was able to make a cause of death finding-blunt force trauma to the head. It was only through DNA analysis of her bones and comparison to family members that the criminal investigators were able to identify her remains.

One of the defendant's family members testified at trial that he had been asked to destroy evidence related to the case and burn the victim's purse. The defendant's mother, Irene Cepi, testified at trial that she had seen her son, Irvin Cepi, on the night of the murder and he had blood on his pants and shoes. He told her

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that he killed someone. Later, the defendant showed his mother the missing person flyer and indicated that he had killed the woman in the missing person flyer.

The defendant shall remain in custody until his sentencing.

Two of Cepi's accomplices, pleaded guilty prior to trial and are pending sentencing. The charges involving the fourth accomplice remain pending, as he was a juvenile at the time of the commission of the rape and murder.

Irvin Cepi, had been charged with violating Title 18 of the United States Code, Sections 1111, 1117, 1201, 2241 and 2245. The case was tried before United States District Court Judge Robert C. Broomfield on February 17-20, 2004.

A conviction for these crimes carries a maximum penalty of life in prison, a \$ 250,000.00 fine or both.

The investigation leading to the guilty verdict was conducted by the FBI and the Navajo Nation Department of Law Enforcement.

Sentencing is set before Judge Broomfield on Monday, April 26, 2004, at 10:00 a.m..

The prosecution is being handled by Soo C. Song, Assistant United States Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix, Arizona.

CASE NUMBER: CR-03-355-PCT-RCB
RELEASE NUMBER: 2004-046

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